

Message Text

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 01 BANGKO 16206 170258Z

71/44

ACTION EA-14

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 NSCE-00 USIE-00 INRE-00 CIAE-00

PM-07 H-03 INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-10 PA-04 RSC-01

PRS-01 SPC-03 SS-20 ACDA-19 IO-14 OMB-01 AID-20 CU-04

OPR-02 SY-10 NIC-01 EB-11 COME-00 AGR-20 TRSE-00

EUR-25 DRC-01 /205 W

----- 123840

O R 161355Z OCT 73

FM AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 7466

INFO AMCONSUL CHIANG MAI

AMCONSUL UDORN

DIA WASHDC

C O N F I D E N T I A L BANGKOK 16206

C O R R E C T E D C O P Y (TO TEXT NBRD PARA FOUR)

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PGOV, TH

SUBJ: PRELIMINARY ANALYSIS OF HOW THE THANOM GOVERNMENT WENT
WRONG

SUMMARY: THE COLLAPSE OF THE THANOM GOVERNMENT
RESULTED FROM TRAGIC MISHANDLING OF STUDENT DEMONSTRATIONS.
BEHIND THIS WAS THE LOSS OF PUBLIC CONFIDENCE IN RTG ABILITY
TO MANAGE THE COUNTRY, POPULAR CONTEMPT FOR OFFICIAL
CORRUPTION, AND AN INCREASINGLY ARTICULATED DESIRE AMONG
THE INTELLECTUAL AND STUDENT ELITE FOR DEMOCRATIC REPRESENT-
ATION IN NATIONAL POLITICS. THE GOVERNMENT FAILED TO UNDER-
STAND OR COPE WITH THE GROWING STUDENT MOVEMENT WHICH WAS
THE VANGUARD FOR MORE REPRESENTATIVE GOVERNMENT. END SUMMARY.

1. THE RESIGNATION OF THE THANOM CABINET AND
THE DEPARTURE OF THE PRINCIPALS FROM THAILAND CAPPED AN
CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 02 BANGKO 16206 170258Z

ESCALATING DETERIORATION OF PUBLIC CONFIDENCE IN THE

GOVERNMENT THIS YEAR. THE RICE SHORTAGE AND THE RISING COST OF RICE UNDERMINED THE PUBLIC'S BELIEF IN THE GOVERNMENT'S ABILITY TO MANAGE THE ECONOMY. THE THUNG YAI HUNTING SCANDAL REVIVED OLD CHARGES OF HIGH LEVEL CORRUPTION, AND THANOM'S EXPLANATION THAT THE HUNTERS HAD BEEN ON A SECRET GOVERNMENT MISSION INSULTED THE INTELLIGENCE OF EDUCATED THAIS.

2. AS PUBLIC CONFIDENCE IN THE CABINET'S ABILITY TO GOVERN DECLINED, THE PUBLIC INCREASINGLY RESENTED ITS OWN INABILITY TO AFFECT GOVERNMENT POLICY OR EVEN VOICE ITS DISSATISFACTION THROUGH LEGAL CHANNELS. THE NOVEMBER 1971 COUP AGAINST THE CONSTITUTION HAD REMOVED EVEN THE FACADE OF PARLIAMENTARY GOVERNMENT. INCREASING USE OF ARTICLE 17 OF THE INTERIM CONSTITUTION CREATED AN IMPRESSION THAT THE GOVERNMENT WAS PUNISHING ITS OPPONENTS UNJUSTLY.

3. PUBLIC DISCONTENT WITH THE GOVERNMENT BRED PERSONAL RESENTMENT AGAINST THANOM, PRAPHAT, AND NARONG, ESPECIALLY THE LATTER TWO. PRAPHAT'S PUBLIC IMAGE HAS NEVER BEEN GOOD, AND HE BECAME A NATURAL TARGET FOR POPULAR RESENTMENT WHEN THINGS WENT BAD. NARONG'S CLOSE RELATIONSHIP TO BOTH THANOM AND PRAPHAT, HIS COCKY PRONOUNCEMENTS ON EVERY FACET OF PUBLIC POLICY, AND THE WIDESPREAD BELIEF, RIGHTLY OR WRONGLY, THAT THANOM AND PRAPHAT WERE GROOMING HIM AS THEIR SUCCESSOR INCREASED PUBLIC SUSPICION THAT THE GOVERNMENT WAS RULING FOR THE BENEFIT OF A SMALL FAMILY CLIQUE RATHER THAN FOR THE GENERAL PUBLIC. ALTHOUGH THE GOVERNMENT IN ITS PATERNALISM MAY HAVE BELIEVED THAT IT WAS DOING WHAT WAS BEST FOR THE COUNTRY, IT FAILED TO CONVINCE THE PUBLIC.

4. GROWING DISSATISFACTION WITH THE GOVERNMENT AND SUSPICION OF ITS MOTIVES PLAYED INTO THE HANDS OF THAILAND'S STUDENT LEADERS, WHO DURING THIS YEAR USED THEMES SUCH AS AL-

LEGED JAPANESE DOMINATION OF THE ECONOMY, THE THUNG YAI SCANDAL, AND THE RICE SHORTAGE TO INCREASE THE POLITICAL ACTIVISM OF STUDENTS AND TO GARNER PUBLIC SUPPORT FOR THEIR
CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 03 BANGKO 16206 170258Z

MOVEMENT. THE EXPULSION OF SIX RAMKHAMHAENG UNIVERSITY STUDENTS IN JUNE FOR CRITICIZING THE GOVERNMENT SET OFF A LARGE STUDENT DEMONSTRATION IN BANGKOK, WHICH RECEIVED WIDESPREAD POPULAR SUPPORT AND, FORCED THE GOVERNMENT TO YIELD TO STUDENT DEMANDS (BANGKOK 9756). EVEN AFTER THIS UNPRECEDENTED EVENT, THE GOVERNMENT CONTINUED TO UNDERESTIMATE THE DETERMINATION OF STUDENTS TO PRESS FOR A CHANGE TO A MORE REPRESENTATIVE FORM OF GOVERN-

MENT. WHEN THE GOVERNMENT ARRESTED 12 PERSONS, (A 13TH WAS ARRESTED LATER), INCLUDING STUDENTS AND LECTURERS, FOR HANDING OUT PAMPHLETS URGING A MORE RAPID PROMULGATION OF A CONSTITUTION AND CHARGED THEM WITH PLOTTING THE OVERTHROW OF THE GOVERNMENT, HUGE DEMONSTRATIONS RESULTED. WHEN THE GOVERNMENT FINALLY AGREED TO ACCEPT THE STUDENTS' DEMAND FOR THE UNCONBITIONAL RELEASE OF THOSE ARRESTED AND PROMISED A CONSTITUTION BY OCTOBER 1974, SUSPICION OF THE GOVERNMENT HAD RISEN TO THE POINT THAT MANY STUDENTS WOULD NOT ACCEPT THE GOVERNMENT'S WORD AND GO HOME.

5. THE GOVERNMENT WOULD HAVE SURVIVED THE LATEST STUDENT CRISIS EXCEPT FOR THE SHOOTING OF STUDENTS BY SECURITY FORCES OCTOBER 14, HOWEVER. ALTHOUGH THE GOVERNMENT INTENDED TO AVOID OPENING FIRE, POLICE FINALLY PANICKED UNDER THE STRAIN OF CONTROLLING THE HOSTILE STUDENT MOB AND PROBABLY UNDER SOME PROVOCATION AS WELL. THE GOVERNMENT'S DECISION, FOLLOWING THE FIRST SHOOTINGS, TO BRING IN THE ARMY TO RESTORE ORDER INCREASED THE THREAT AND THE ACTUALITY OF VIOLENCE, AND PUBLIC OUTRAGE AGAINST THE GOVERNMENT FORCED THE RESIGNATION OF THE CABINET IN SHORT ORDER. EVEN THE APPOINTMENT OF A NEW PRIME MINISTER DID NOT SATISFY MANY STUDENTS, WHO REFUSED TO DISPERSE UNTIL THE ANNOUNCEMENT OF THE DEPARTURE FROM THAILAND OF THANOM, PRAPHAT AND NARONG.

6.
E E E E E E E

Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: n/a
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 16 OCT 1973
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: golinofr
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1973BANGKO16206
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: RR
Errors: N/A
Film Number: n/a
From: BANGKOK
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1973/newtext/t19731028/aaaaaudl.tel
Line Count: 136
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE
Office: ACTION EA
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators:
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: golinofr
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags: ANOMALY
Review Date: 05 DEC 2001
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <05-Dec-2001 by smithrj>; APPROVED <27-Dec-2001 by golinofr>
Review Markings:

Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
30 JUN 2005

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: PRELIMINARY ANALYSIS OF HOW THE THANOM GOVERNMENT WENT WRONG
TAGS: PGOV, TH
To: SECSTATE WASHDC CHIANG MAI UDORN DIA WASHDC
Type: TE
Markings: Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 30 JUN 2005